Carbondale Problems Reviewed

Mayor Eyes Mill Hike, Bond To Ease City's Financial Woes

By RAY RINALDI

In a wide-ranging two-hour press conference Thursday afternoon that touched on a variety of subjects, Carbondale Mayor Fred J. Mancuso said that the city's financial condition "was not in good shape," and indicated that one of the avenues he is studying to get the city back on its financial feet would be permission from the courts to increase the millage, allowing the city to raise taxes and float a bond.

The Mayor stated that the council is going to have to come up with a realistic, workable budget (for 1983), citing as an example the $12,000 allocated in the 1982 budget for Special Police. That figure is going to fall quite a bit short of the actual amount needed because of injuries to one policeman (Grant Barrows), the hospitalization of another (Sgt. Russell Scavo), and the death of Chief John Burke.

Concerning the outstanding bills the city owes, and in particular the $96,000 to PP&L, the Mayor said he hoped, and felt that PP&L would be understanding and patient. "Carbondale's bill is small potatoes," said the Mayor, "compared to other bills owed the power company, in the millions."

In regard to the statement made by former city administrator Peter Judge at last Monday's council meeting, citing a cost overrun in the Community Development Program amounting to approximately $50,000, the Mayor said, "Judge should have given me those figures before he left."

The Mayor indicated that if indeed there is a cost overrun it would be due solely to inflation, "which is running better then 1% per month."

Questioned on the statement made by Councilman James McMyne at the same meeting, that the Mayor's appointment to the managing director's post, Joseph Masco, was not qualified for the job, Mancuso retorted, "take a look at McMyne's appointments," obviously referring to the appointment of Judge as director of finance in 1977 when McMyne was mayor. "It's just sour grapes," said Mancuso.

Mancuso said that the Gordon Avenue project is proceeding on schedule. "We did have a problem with one of the residents who would have liked to have engineered the construction on his own in front of his house," said the Mayor, "but that would have run us an additional $50,000. I took a ride down that way this morning, and I know the residents are living with a mess right now, but with a little more patience the job will soon be completed and they'll have a new street and new sidewalks."

The mayor pointed out that in 1978 he was able to secure for Carbondale three of the six federal highway projects being funded in the county, those being streets and curbing on Church and 42nd, and the new signal light system. In 1979, the Mayor said he was again able to secure three of six federal projects for the city, Gordon Avenue and Dundaff Street, and Fallbrook Street where the funding had been originally scheduled for Jefferson Avenue in Scranton.

The mayor said that although he tried, he was unable to get funding for Cottage or Main Streets, and that the status of the Brooklyn Street relocation (in front of the high school), is almost dead. "The cost of the project originally was $835,000, but that has now ballooned to $1,073,000, which means it's getting more and more out of our grasp."

"I've also been trying, since 1968 when I was a councilman, to get PennDOT to do something with that 'hump' in the road on Wayne Street. I've been trying to keep the pressure on for them to cut that hump down by at least a foot and a half."

The lack of money for additional highway projects can be attributed directly "to a lack of foresight in Harrisburg," said the Mayor. "They are paying $200 million a year in interest and nothing against the principal for the interstate system."

Concerning construction of the at-grade crossing and removal of the Dundaff viaduct, the mayor indicated that it may not be completed this year. However, the mayor did show blueprints of the construction plans which show three lanes leading to the crossing on the South end, and a wide expanse of lawn area in front of the homes on lower Fallbrook. The mayor also said that while the at-grade crossing is being constructed, the road between the Armory and the Hendrick building, curving around the West Side Playground to meet Hospital Street, and Hospital Street itself to Fallbrook Street, would be